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THE BOSTON MYCOLOGICAL CLUB.

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ALTHOUGH the BOSTON MYCOLOGICAL CLUB has not the honor of being the first of its kind to be organized in this country, that distinction belonging to the Westfield Toadstool Club of Westfield, New York, yet it dates from the same year. In the summer of 1895, after numerous appeals had appeared in the papers for help in the study of fungi as food, a few gentlemen and one lady met at Horticultural Hall and agreed, after some deliberation, to form a club to be known as the Boston Mycological Club, with the following officers: President, Julius A. Palmer, Jr.; Vice-President, Wm. C. Bates; Secretary and Treasurer, Hollis Webster.

For a good many years previously experiments had been made by a few persistent American mycophagists, for example, by the Rev. M. A. Curtis, fifty years ago, and more recently by Captain Palmer and Professor Peck, to test the edibility of certain species recommended by Badham, Berkeley and other European writers, and also that of others not then in any list of edible kinds. Although the results of these experiments were made available by repeated publication, popular knowledge of the subject grew slowly, in spite of a deal of good-natured urging by these pioneers. That interest had, nevertheless, been aroused was shown by the welcome accorded in 1894 to articles by Dr. Farlow, Professor Peck and Mr. W. H. Gibson, which appeared in various periodicals in almost simultaneous response to the general demand for information. That at last the multitude were waiting only for guidance before eagerly joining in a fascinatingly dangerous pursuit has been further shown by the rapid increase in the membership of the Boston Club, from the little company that first met in August five

years ago to its present number of nearly five hundred, and also by the formation of similar societies in other parts of the country.

The aims of the Club, well set forth in the following extract from the constitution, are these: "To study edible mushrooms and toadstools and those noxious and poisonous kinds which might be mistaken for them, to collect and spread all valuable information concerning them, to arouse interest in mushrooms as food, and by exhibitions, lectures, and publications to make easy and certain the recognition of the few fungi that are poisonous and of the many that are edible."

Of the means toward these ends the exhibitions of fresh fungi are naturally the most important. On Saturdays, throughout the summer and autumn, fungi are brought to Horticultural Hall, where, through the courtesy of the Massachusetts Horticultural Society, they are placed on exhibition for the benefit of the public. The specimens are arranged by genera under cards on which generic characters are given, and, wherever possible, the specific names are also added together with information as to the quality as food. It is at the talks which follow these exhibitions, illustrated as they are by fresh material, that the most effective help is given. Special pains are taken to make all who attend these meetings acquainted, first of all, with the poisonous *Amanitas*, and to give emphasis to the fact that there is no short cut to the detection of poisonous forms, but that each individual specimen must be studied carefully and distinguished by characteristic marks. These demonstrations are so often repeated that those who attend the talks with any regularity can hardly escape instruction upon these vital points; and it is safe to say that, as a result of the Club's efforts, hundreds of people now possess and are spreading this essential knowledge which a few years ago was the property of a very few. Supplementary to the Saturday meetings are the excursions which occur at intervals through the summer, whenever the weather gives promise of a successful trip.

When the November frosts check the appearance of mushrooms in the fields and woods, methods of instruction are necessarily changed. Lantern slides, of which the Club has about three hundred, take the place of fresh plants to illustrate talks, which are given on the third Monday evening of each month from November to May in the lecture-room of the Boston Society of Natural History.

From time to time throughout the year bulletins have been issued, the earlier of these giving hints as to methods of collecting, advice as to books, and remarks upon various elementary matters, very helpful to

those who are ignorant not only of fungi but of other departments of botany as well. To make up in some slight degree for the lack of a comprehensive systematic work on mushrooms, synopses of various genera, with descriptions of the species most likely to be met with, are given in the more recent bulletins. It is to the bulletins that the Club owes its large membership in many cities of the South and West.

For the preservation of a record of the distribution of species, and for collecting other information of scientific value, an herbarium has been started, to which have already been added most of the more conspicuous fungi to be found in the neighborhood of Boston. It is the wish of a few of the more devoted and enthusiastic workers to make this herbarium of more general use to the Club members by placing it in a suitable room, in some part of Boston easily accessible, with some one in attendance to help in the identification of specimens.

For membership in the Club the only qualifications are an interest in mushrooms and the payment of one dollar each year.

The officers for the current year, which ends on April 30, are: President, George B. Fessenden; Vice-president, Wm. C. Bates; Recording Secretary and Treasurer, Miss Jennie F. Conant; Corresponding Secretary, Hollis Webster, P. O. Box 21, Cambridge, Mass.

SOME UNCOMMON MOSSES IN NORTHERN ESSEX COUNTY, MASSACHUSETTS.

J. W. HUNTINGTON.

PERHAPS it might be interesting to the readers of RHODORA to know that quite a number of species of mosses considered very rare or unknown to the State of Massachusetts are found quite plentifully in the towns of Essex County, north of the Merrimac River, especially Amesbury. This town is a particularly good locality, from the fact that it has a diversity of habitat, and so is well adapted to the growth of many species. The centre of the town is, in fact, a swamp, which is undoubtedly of glacial origin, a well-defined moraine skirting its entire southern border, sometimes cutting across and making little bays of swamp land, which it is quite interesting to follow out and study. The borders of this swamp are somewhat depressed, while the centre is crowning, making a very noticeable difference in the distribution of certain species of mosses. For instance, *Hylocomium squarrosum*,